

## SCHILLER *Sendung Moses*, The Mission of Moses<sup>1</sup>

The founding of the Jewish nation by Moses is one of the most notable events preserved by history, important for the strength of understanding whereby it was accomplished, more important still for its consequences upon the world, which last up to this moment. Two religions which rule the largest part of the inhabitants of the Earth, Christianity and Islam, both depend upon the religion of the Hebrews, and without the latter there would never have been either a Christianity or a Koran.

Indeed, in a certain sense it is irrefutably true, that we owe to Mosaic religion a large part of the enlightenment, which we enjoy today. For through it, a precious truth, the which a Reason left unto itself had only found after a long development—the teaching of the one God—was temporarily spread among the people, and sustained among them as the object of blind faith, until it had finally matured in brighter minds into a concept of Reason. Thus was a large part of humanity spared the sad and errant ways toward which belief in pantheism must ultimately lead, and the Hebrew constitution obtained the exclusive advantage, that the religion of the wise men did not stand in direct contradiction to the popular religion, as still was the case among the enlightened heathens. Considered from this point of view, the nation of the Hebrews must appear to us as an important, universal historical people, and everything evil, which one is accustomed to impute to this people, all the efforts of facetious minds to belittle this achievement, shall not prevent us from doing it justice. The disgrace and depravity of a nation cannot efface the sublime merits of its legislators, and just as little annul the great influence to which this nation makes just claim in world history.

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<sup>1</sup> This essay belongs in Schiller's series of lectures on Universal History from the summer of 1789 at Jena University. It was first published in *Thalia*, Schiller's journal of original poetry and philosophical writings, in 1790. Schiller himself reported that one of the major sources for this essay was Br. Decius's work, *The Hebrew Mysteries, or the Oldest Religious Freemasonry* (Leipzig: 1788).

Like an impure and base vessel, yet within which something very precious is preserved, we must treasure it; we must do homage to that channel in it, which, as impure as it was, elected the prescience to guide us toward the most noble of all goods, the truth; the which truth, however, also destroyed, as soon as it had accomplished, what it had to do. In this way, we shall also not impose upon the Hebrew people a merit which it never had, nor deprive it of a merit to which its rightful claims cannot be contested.

The Hebrews came, as we know, as a single nomadic family of not over 70 souls, to Egypt, and first became a people in Egypt. During a span of time of approximately 400 years during which they resided in this land, they increased to nearly 2 million, among which were counted some 600,000 warlike men when they left this kingdom. During this long sojourn, they lived segregated from the Egyptians, segregated as well by their own place of residence, which they adopted, and by their nomadic condition, which made of them the abomination of the native people of the country, and excluded them from partaking of the civil rights of the Egyptians. They continued to govern themselves in the nomadic manner, the father of the house ruling over the family, the prince of the tribe ruling over the tribes, and thus constituted a kind of state within the state, which, on account of its immense increase, ultimately aroused the concern of the kings.

Such a segregated mass of people in the heart of the kingdom, indolent by their lifestyle, who banded together quite closely, but who had no interest whatever in common with the state, might become dangerous if there were a hostile invasion, and might easily be tempted to exploit the weakness of the state, whose indolent spectators they were. The wisdom of the state thus counseled to guard them closely, to keep them occupied with activity, and to take thought to the reduction of their numbers. They were set to heavy labor, and as it was learned to make them useful to the state in this way, self-interest joined hands with policy, to increase their burdens. Inhumanly, they were compelled to slave, and special taskmasters were assigned to goad and mistreat them at their work. This barbaric treatment, however, did not prevent them from multiplying

more rapidly. A healthy policy had naturally led to dispersing them among other inhabitants, and giving them equal rights with these; but the general abhorrence the Egyptians felt toward them stood in the way. This abhorrence was enhanced still more by the consequences it inevitably had. When the king of the Egyptians bestowed the province of Goshen (on the East side of the lower Nile) upon Jacob's family for them to inhabit, he hardly expected a progeny of 2 million then to house there; the province was thus probably of no considerable extent, and the gift was generous enough, although conceived for but a one-hundredth part of the future generation. Since the living space of the Hebrews did not increase at the same pace as their population, with each successive generation they were compelled to live ever more closely together, until they ultimately pressed together in the most narrow spaces in a way most disadvantageous to health. What was more natural than that just those consequences transpired which are inevitable in such cases?—the greatest squalor and infectious pestilence. This first set the stage for that misfortune which has been this nation's down to the present time; but back then, it ravaged to a frightful extent. The most horrible epidemic in this latitude, leprosy, tore in upon them, and became the heritage of generations to come. The sources of life and procreation were gradually poisoned by it, and from a fortuitous ill finally arose an hereditary tribal constitution. How general this disease was, can be gleaned from the number of precautions the legislator took against it; and the unanimous testimony of the chronicles of the Egyptian Manetho, of Diodorus of Sicily, of Tacitus, or Lysimachus, Strabo, and many others, who know nearly nothing else of the Jewish nation than this plague of leprosy, demonstrates how general and how deep was the Egyptians' impression of it.

Thus, leprosy, a natural consequence of their close quarters, poor and scanty nutrition, and the mistreatment to which they were subjected, became in turn a new cause of the same. They, who were at first despised as nomads and shunned as foreigners, were now avoided and cursed for their pollution. In addition to the fear and repugnance ever harbored against them in Egypt, there was joined a loathing and a deeply repulsive contempt. Against people so fearsomely branded with the wrath of the

gods, everything was permitted, and there were no reservations against depriving them of the most sacred human rights.

No wonder, that the barbarism against them increased in just the degree, as the consequences of this barbarous treatment became more evident, and as they were punished more severely for the misery, which the Egyptians themselves had inflicted upon them.

The bad policy of the Egyptians knew of no other means to improve upon the errors they had made than to commit new and more heinous errors. Since, despite all the pressures they applied, they did not succeed in quelling the growth of the population, they fell upon a solution as inhuman as it was wretched, that of having newborn sons at once smothered by the midwives. But thanks be to the better nature of Man! Despots are not always well followed, when their commands are the commission of abominations. The midwives in Egypt knew well to scoff at this unnatural decree, and the government was left no other recourse than to implement its violent expedients by violent means. Hired assassins roamed by royal order through the homes of the Hebrews, and killed every male child in its cradle. In this way, the Egyptian government had surely accomplished its purpose, and were no savior to intervene, it had seen the nation of the Jews eradicated in a few generations.

But whence should this savior come to the Hebrews? Hardly from among the Egyptians themselves, for how should one of them intercede on behalf of a nation foreign to him, whose language was incomprehensible to him, which he would certainly take no trouble to learn, a nation which must seem to him as unworthy as incapable of a better fate? Even less from their own midst, for what had the inhumanity of the Egyptian in the course of some centuries finally made of the Hebrew people? The coarsest, the most malicious, the most despised people of the Earth, turned savage by three hundred years of neglect, made despondent and embittered by such long pressure of slavery, degraded in their own eyes by a congenital infamy, too unnerved and paralyzed for heroic resolutions, by such long-enduring stupidity cast down to be hardly more than animals. How, out of such a depraved race

of people, should a free man rise forth, an enlightened mind, a hero, or a statesman? Where should there be found among them a man to bequeath respect to such a deeply despised and enslaved mob, a feeling of itself—to a people so long repressed, to such an ignorant, raw rabble of shepherds, superiority over its more refined repressor? From among the Hebrews of that time, it was as impossible for a bold and courageous mind to emerge, as from among the outcast pariahs among the Hindus.

Here the great hand of Providence, which looses the most intricate of knots with the simplest of means, overwhelms us with wonder—but not that providence, which intervenes in the forceful way of a miracle in the economy of nature; rather, that which has prescribed such economy to nature herself, effecting things most extraordinary in the calmest of ways. A born Egyptian lacked the challenge necessary to become a redeemer on behalf of the national interests of the Hebrews. A mere Hebrew had necessarily foundered upon such an enterprise, for lack of the force and mind required. Thus, what solution did fortune elect? It took a Hebrew, but prematurely tore him forth from his own coarse people, and let him partake of the enjoyment of Egyptian wisdom; and thus did a Hebrew, Egyptian-educated, become the instrument through which this nation escaped from slavery.

A Hebrew mother of the Levite tribe hid her newborn son three long months from its assassins, who did away with all the male fruit of the womb among her people; finally, she gave up hope of providing him sanctuary any longer. Need breathed into her a deception, whereby she hoped possibly to keep him. She laid her infant into a small basket of papyrus, which she had sealed from the water with pitch, and awaited the time when the Pharaoh's daughters usually bathed. Shortly before, the child's sisters laid the basket in which the child lay into the reeds, where the royal daughters would pass by and must notice the child. She herself, however, remained nearby, to await the further fate of the child. Indeed, the Pharaoh's daughter soon caught sight of the child, and, since the child pleased her, she decided to save him. Then did his sister dare approach, and offered to bring him a Hebrew nurse, to which the princess conceded. Thus for the second time did the mother receive her

son, and was now permitted to educate him without danger. And it was thus that he learned the language of his nation, became familiar with its customs, and it is likely that his mother failed not to implant a moving impression of general misery in his tender soul. As he had reached the years when he no longer needed his mother's care, and as it became necessary to remove him from the general fate of his people, his mother brought him once again to the royal daughter, and now surrendered to *her* the boy's further fate. The Pharaoh's daughter adopted him and gave him the name Moses, for he had been saved from the water. Thus of a slave-child and sacrificial victim became the son of a daughter of the king, and as such, partaking in all the advantages enjoyed by the children of kings. The priests, to whose order he belonged from just that moment when he was adopted into the royal family, now took over his education, and instructed him in all matters of Egyptian wisdom, which were the exclusive prerogative of their caste. It is likely indeed, that they withheld none of their secrets from him, for a passage from the Egyptian historian Manetho, where he portrays Moses as an apostate of the Egyptian religion, and as a priest fled from Heliopolis, leads us to suspect, that he was appointed to the priestly caste.

In order to determine what Moses may have learned in this school, and what part the education he received among the Egyptian priests had in his later legislation, we must enter into a close investigation of this institution, and hear the testimony of ancient writers on that which was taught and practiced there. The Apostle Stephen himself tells us, that he was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. The historian Philo says, that Moses was initiated by the Egyptian priests in the philosophy of symbols and hieroglyphics, as well as in the mysteries of the sacred animals. This testimony is confirmed by numerous others, and if one once looks upon what were called the Egyptian mysteries, a remarkable similarity appears between these mysteries and what Moses later did and legislated.

The worship of the most ancient peoples, as we know, soon degenerated into polytheism and superstition, and even among those whom the Bible describes to us as worshippers of the true God, the ideas they had of the

Supreme Being were neither pure nor noble, and based upon nothing more than an enlightened, reasonable insight. But as soon as the social classes were set apart by a better institution of civil society and by the foundation of an orderly state, and concern for sacred things having become the province of a special class; as soon as the human spirit was freed of concerns diverting its attentions, and obtained leisure to devote itself solely to considerations of itself and nature; and, finally, as soon as a clearer look had been cast into the physical economy of nature, then was Reason's victory over those coarser errors assured, and the ideas about the Supreme Being necessarily ennobled. The idea of a universal connection among things must lead necessarily to the conception of a single, Supreme Understanding, and where else should that idea have taken seed than in the mind of a priest? Since Egypt was the first cultured state known to history, and the most ancient mysteries originally come from Egypt, here too it was, in all probability, that the idea of the unity of the Supreme Being was first thought in a human mind. The happy discoverer of this idea, which so elevates the soul, now sought capable subjects among those around him, to whom he imparted this idea as a sacred treasure, and so it was passed down through the generations from one thinker to another, through who knows how many generations, until it finally became the possession of a very small community capable of comprehending it, and further developing it.

But since a certain measure of knowledge and a certain development of the mind is required to correctly comprehend the idea of one single God, and to employ it, since belief in the Divine Unity necessarily carried with it a contempt for polytheism, which was still the prevailing religion, one soon understood, that it were imprudent, even dangerous, to propagate this idea in public and generally. Without having previously overthrown the traditional gods of the state, and exhibiting them in their ludicrous destitution, one could not promise the new teaching acceptance. But one could neither foresee, nor hope, that those to whom one made the old superstitions ludicrous, would also at once be capable of elevating themselves to the pure and difficult idea of the True. Besides, the entirety of the civil constitution was founded upon that superstition; were this caused to collapse, all the pillars supporting the entire edifice of the state

had collapsed at the same time, and it was still quite uncertain, whether the new religion, conceived to take its place, would also stand at once firm enough to carry that edifice.

On the other hand, were the attempt to overthrow the old gods to end in failure, one had but armed blind fanaticism against oneself, and abandoned oneself into the hands of mad masses to be their sacrificial victim. It was therefore thought far better to make this new and dangerous truth the exclusive possession of a small, closed community, to draw those who demonstrated the requisite measure of power of comprehension out of the multitude, and to take them up into the covenant, to cloak the truth itself, which it was deemed desirable to withhold from impure eyes, in a veil of secrecy, a veil only those might draw aside who had been made so capable.

To that purpose were the hieroglyphics chosen, a speaking language of images, holding a general conception hidden in a composition of sensuous symbols, and based upon some arbitrary rules, which had been agreed upon. As these enlightened men of idolatry knew well how strong the effects of imagination and the senses can be upon young hearts, they had no reservations against the use of this artifice of deception to the advantage of the truth. They thus implanted the new ideas into the soul with a certain sensuous ceremony, and by all sorts of contrivances suited to this purpose, they set the emotions of their apprentice into a state of passionate motion, intended to make the apprentice receptive for the new truth. Of this kind were the purifications the initiates had to undergo, the washing and sprinkling, wrapping in linen clothing, abstinence from all enjoyments of the senses, tension and elevation of the emotions through song, a meaningful silence, alternations between darkness and light, and other such practices.

These ceremonies, in connection with such mysterious images and hieroglyphics and the hidden truths, which lay enshrouded within these hieroglyphics, and prepared by such uses, were known collectively under the name of the mysteries. Their seat was the temple of Isis and Serapis, and they were the model, according to which the mysteries in Eleusis



and Samothracia, and, in more recent times, of the Order of the Freemasons, were formed.

It seems beyond any doubt, that the content of the most ancient mysteries in Heliopolis and Memphis, in their uncorrupted condition, was the oneness of God and the refutation of paganism, and that the immortality of the soul was also taught in them. Those who partook of these important elucidations called themselves onlookers, or *epopts*, because the recognition of a formerly hidden truth is comparable to stepping from darkness into the light, and possibly also for that reason, that they really and truly looked upon the newly recognized truths in the form of sensuous images.

But they could not attain to this vision all at once, because the mind first had to be purified of many errors, had to have gone first through many preparations, before it could bear to look upon the full light of truth. There were, thus, levels or degrees, and the shadows first fell fully from the eyes only in the innermost sanctuary.

The *epopts* knew one simple, Supreme Cause of all things, a first power of nature, the Being of all beings, which was identical to the *demiurgos* of the Greek wise men. Nothing is more sublime than the simple grandeur with which they spoke of the Creator of the world. In order to distinguish Him in a clearer way, they gave Him no name at all. "A name," they said, "is merely a requirement of differentiation; he who is alone has need of no name, for there is no other existence with which he might be confused." Under an old statue of Isis, one read the words: "*I am, what there is*," and upon a pyramid in Sa;auis, one found the ancient and most remarkable inscription: "I am all, that is, that was, and that will be; no mortal hath lifted my veil." No one was permitted to step into the temple of Serapis, who did not bear the name Jao—or J-ha-ho, a name which sounds nearly the same as the Hebrew Jehovah—upon his breast or forehead; and no name was pronounced with more reverence in Egypt than this name Jao. In the hymn which the *hierophant*, or master priest of the temple, sang to those undergoing initiation, this was the first elucidation given of the nature of the divinity: "He is unique and

becomes of himself, and to this uniqueness do all things owe their existence.”

A preparatory, necessary ceremony prior to every initiation was circumcision, to which Pythagoras, too, had to submit before his acceptance into the Egyptian mysteries. This distinction from others who were not circumcised, was supposed to demonstrate a close brotherhood, a closer relationship to the divinity, and this is how Moses, also, used it later among the Hebrews.

Inside the temple, various sacred instruments were demonstrated to the initiates, instruments expressing a secret meaning. Among these were a sacred chest, called the coffin of Serapis, and which originally was probably supposed to be an expression of hidden wisdom; but later, when the institution was corrupted, it served the mystery-mongering and games of the wretched priests. It was a prerogative of the priests, or one of their own class of servants of the temple, who were called *kistophors*, to carry this chest around. No one except the *hierophants* was permitted to open this chest, or even to touch it. Of one, who was so presumptuous as to open the chest, it is told, that he suddenly became insane.

In the Egyptian mysteries, furthermore, certain hieroglyphic sacred images are found, consisting of composites of several animal forms. The well-known sphinx is of this kind; one intended in this way to denote the characteristics unified in the Supreme Being, or also to throw together the most powerful creatures among all living things into one body. Something was taken from the most powerful bird, the eagle, something from the most powerful of wild animals, the lion, from the most powerful of domesticated animals, the steer, and, finally, something from the most powerful of all animals, Man. The image of the steer or of Apis was particularly used as a symbol of strength, to denote the omnipotence of the Supreme Being; but in the original language the steer was called *cherub*.

These mystical forms, to which none but the *epopts* had the key, gave the mysteries themselves a sensuous outside, which deceived the people, and indeed, had much in common with idolatry. Thus, superstition received an everlasting nourishment through the external garment of the mysteries, whereas in the sanctuary itself one mocked it.

Yet it is perfectly understandable, how this pure deism could cohabitate with idolatry, for it overthrew idolatry from within, while promoting it from without. The excuse offered by the founders of this system for the contradiction between the religion of the priests and the people's religion, was necessity; it seemed the lesser of two evils, because there was more hope to constrain the evil consequences of the concealed truth, than the damaging effects of the untimely discovery of this truth. As with the passage of time, unworthy members penetrated the circles of the initiated, and as the institution lost its original purity, recourse was taken to what had at first been only expediency, the mysteries became the purpose of the institution, and instead of gradually cleansing superstition, and skillfully preparing the people to receive the truth, advantage was sought in ever greater deception of the people, casting it ever deeper into superstition. Priestly crafts now took the place of those innocent and more open intents, and just that institution which was supposed to receive, maintain, and cautiously spread knowledge of the true and one God, began to become the most powerful instrument for the promotion of the contrary, and to devolve into a true school of idolatry. *Hierophants*, in order not to lose their command over the emotions of their subjects, and to sustain expectations ever-tensed, thought it most fit to postpone the final elucidation of the mysteries ever longer, the which must disappoint all false expectations forever, and to make access to the sanctuary the more difficult, by all kinds of theatrical tricks. Ultimately, the key to the hieroglyphics and the mysterious figures was utterly lost, and these were now taken to be the truth itself, the which they had originally been designed merely to cloak.

It is difficult to ascertain, whether Moses' years of education fell in the time when the institution was flourishing, or at the beginning of its corruption; it is probable, however, that it was already approaching its

decline, as a number of playful tricks lead us to conclude, which the Hebrew legislator borrowed, and also a number of notorious deceptions which he brought into practice. But the spirit of the founders had not yet disappeared from the institution, and the teaching of the unity of the Creator of the world still rewarded the expectations of the initiated.

This teaching, which inevitably resulted in the most thorough contempt for polytheism, and connected to the teaching of immortality, hardly separable from it, was the rich treasure the young Hebrew brought forth from the mysteries of Isis. At the same time, he became better acquainted with the forces of nature, which at that time were also the object of secret sciences, and this knowledge later enabled him to work miracles, and to challenge his own teachers and magicians, whom he surpassed in some exercises, even in the presence of the Pharaoh. His subsequent course of life proves, that he had been an astute and adept student, and had reached the last and highest degrees.

In this school he also assembled a treasure store of hieroglyphics, mystical images, and ceremonies, of which his inventive mind subsequently made use. He had traversed the entire expanse of Egyptian wisdom, thought through the entire system of the priests, weighed its defects and advantages, its strengths and weaknesses, and also gained important insights into the statecraft of this people.

It is not known how long he stayed in the school of the priests, but his later steps upon the political stage, taken only as he approached his eightieth year, make it likely, that he devoted himself to the study of the mysteries and the state for twenty years and more. His stay among the priests, however, seems not to have kept him from intercourse with his people, and he had opportunity enough to witness the inhumanity under which they suffered.

Egyptian education had not supplanted his national feelings. The mistreatment of his people reminded him, that he, too, was a Hebrew, and a just bitterness dug itself deeply into his breast as often as he saw his

people suffer. The more he began to feel himself, the more did the injustice against his own people outrage him.

Once he saw a Hebrew abused by the whip of an Egyptian taskmaster; this sight overwhelmed him; he killed the Egyptian. The deed soon becomes renowned, his life is in danger, he must leave Egypt and flee into the Arab desert. Many put this flight in his fortieth year, but without any proof. It is enough for us to know, that Moses could no longer have been very young when it occurred.

With this exile, a new epoch of his life begins, and if we are to correctly judge his later political emergence in Egypt, we must also accompany him through his solitude in Arabia. A bloody hate against the repressors of his nation, and all the knowledge he had gathered from the mysteries, he carried with him into the Arabian desert. His mind was full of ideas and plans, his heart full of bitterness, and nothing distracted him in this deserted wasteland.

The chronicles tell of his herding the sheep of an Arab Bedouin Jethro.—Such a descent from all his prospects and hopes in Egypt to shepherding in Arabia! From a future ruler of men to the slave of a nomad! How deeply this must have wounded his soul!

In the robes of a shepherd, he carries along the fiery spirit of a regent, a restless ambition. Here in this romantic desert, where the present has nothing to offer him, he seeks recourse in the past and future, and confers with his silent thoughts. All the scenes of repression he had witnessed back then, now pass over him in memories, and nothing now prevents them from pressing their sharp barbs deeply into his soul. Nothing is more unbearable to his great soul than to tolerate injustice; moreover, it is his own people which is suffering. A noble pride awakens in his breast, and a powerful impulse, to act and put himself forward, accompanies this offended pride.

Everything he has gathered over long years, everything beautiful and great which he has thought and planned, all of this should die with him

in this desert, everything thought and planned in vain? This thought his fiery soul cannot withstand. He raises himself above his fate; this wasteland shall not become the limit of his activity; for the supreme being he learned of in the mysteries has directed him toward something grand. His imagination, enflamed by solitude and stillness, grasps at what lies closest, takes party with the repressed. Like emotions seek their like, and he who is unfortunate must incline to the side of the unfortunate. In Egypt, he had become an Egyptian, an *hierophant*, a military leader; in Arabia, he becomes Hebrew. Grand and magnificent, it arises before his mind—the idea: “I will redeem this people.”

But what possibility is there to execute this plan? Unfathomable are the obstacles which impress themselves upon him, and those he must needs take on among his people themselves are by far the most horrible. He cannot take for granted concord or confidence, neither sense of self nor courage, neither a common spirit, nor an enthusiasm calling to bold deeds; long years of slavery, a 400 years’ misery, have smothered all these emotions.—The people, at whose head he shall step, are as little capable as worthy of this hazardous venture. From this people itself he can expect nothing, and yet without this people he can accomplish nothing. What recourse remains to him? Before he undertakes the liberation of his people, he must begin to make it capable of this beneficent act. He must reinstate it in those human rights which it has cast off. He must reinstall all the qualities which long savagery has smothered; he must enflame it with hope, confidence, heroism, and enthusiasm.

But these emotions among his people can only base themselves upon a (true or deceptive) feeling of their own power, and whence shall slaves of the Egyptians take this feeling? Were he even successful for a moment in sweeping them away with his eloquence—will this artificial enthusiasm not leave them at the first sight of danger? Will they not become more despondent than ever, fall back into their feeling of slavery?

Here is where the Egyptian priest and statesman comes to the help of the Hebrew. From his mysteries, from his priestly school at Heliopolis, he now recalls the effective instruments, by which a small order of priests

controlled millions of cruder men according to its will. This instrument is none other than the confidence in a supraterritorial protection, belief in supranatural forces. Since in the visible world, in the natural course of things, he finds nothing with which he can give his repressed nation courage, since he can bind his people's confidence to nothing earthly, he binds it to heaven. Since he gives up hope of being able to give his people a feeling of its own power, there is nothing for him to do, but to proclaim to his people a God who has these powers. If he succeeds in instilling his people with confidence in this God, he will have made his people strong and bold, and confidence in this higher arm is the flame, which must make him succeed in enkindling all other virtues and powers. If, to his brothers, he can become the legitimate organ and emissary of this God, they will become a ball in his hands, he can lead them as he will. But now the question: Which God shall he proclaim to them, and whereby can he procure their faith in Him?

Shall he proclaim to them the true God, the Demiurge, or Jao, in whom he himself believes, whom he has come to know in the mysteries?

How could he entrust to an ignorant, enslaved rabble, which his nation is, even the slightest comprehension of a truth, which is the heritage of a few Egyptian wise men, and which presumes a high degree of enlightenment, to be comprehended? How could he flatter himself with hope, that the outcasts of Egypt might understand something grasped by only few among the best of this country?

But even if he succeeded in bringing knowledge of the true God to the Hebrews—in their situation, they had no need of this God, and knowledge of this God would rather undermine his design than promote it. The true God concerns himself for the Hebrew people no more than any other people.—The true God could not fight for them, throw over the laws of Nature for their sake.—He let them fight out their cause with the Egyptians, and interceded with no miracles in their conflict, and why should He?

Shall he proclaim to them a false and mythical god, against which his own Reason takes outrage, one such as the mysteries have caused him to hate? His mind is too enlightened for that, his heart too sincere and too noble. Upon a lie he will not found his beneficent undertaking. The enthusiasm, which now fills his soul, would not lend her beneficent fire to a fraud, and to such a contemptuous role, which so contradicts his innermost convictions, and thus had he been bereft of his courage, joy, and determination. He wants the benefaction he bestows upon his people to be perfect: He wants his people not merely independent and free. He wants to make his people happy, too, and enlightened. He wants to found his work for eternity.

Thus, not upon a fraud, but upon truth must his work be founded. But how shall he make these contradictions accord? The true God he cannot proclaim to the Hebrews, because they cannot grasp Him: a mythical god he does not want to proclaim, for this he despises. The only recourse remaining is to proclaim to them *his true God in a mythical way*.

Now he examines his religion of Reason, and investigates what he must add and take away from it, to assure it a favorable reception among the Hebrews. He descends into their situation, into their limitations, into their souls, and espies there the latent threads to which he will be able to bind his truth.

He bestows upon his God those qualities, which the powers of comprehension of the Hebrews and their present needs require of Him. He thus accommodates his Jao to the people to whom he will proclaim Him; he accomodates Him to the circumstances under which he will proclaim Him, and thus arises his Jehovah.

In the hearts of the people, he indeed finds belief in sacred things, but this belief has devolved into the crudest of superstition. He must extirpate this superstition, but he must maintain the belief. He must merely dissolve it from its present unworthy subject, and direct it toward his new divinity. Superstition itself provides him the instruments to accomplish this. According to the general delusion of the time, every people stood



under the protection of a special national divinity, and it flattered the national pride to set this divinity above all other gods among the other peoples. The latter, however, were not denied their divinity; they were recognized to be gods, but they were not allowed to rise above the particular national god of one's own nation. To this error Moses tied his truth. He made the Demiurge of the mysteries into the national God of the Hebrews, but he went one step further.

He was not satisfied to make this national God the most powerful of all gods; rather, he made Him the only God, and cast all other gods around back into their nothingness. He gave his God to the Hebrews as their property, in order to comfort their imaginations, but he designed Him at once for all other peoples and all forces of nature. In the image in which he presented Him to the Hebrews, he salvaged the two most important characteristics of his own true God, unity and omnipotence, and made them the more effective in this human guise.

The vain and childish pride, that of wanting to exclusively possess the divinity, now had to do its work to the advantage of truth, and to assure the reception of his teaching of the one God. Clearly, it is only a new folly, that he overthrows the old one; but this new folly is much closer to the truth than that which it replaces; and it is alone this small addition of folly, which makes his truth become joyous, and everything he gains thereby, he owes to this foreseen misunderstanding of his teaching. What had his Hebrews been able to do with a philosophical God? With this national God, on the other hand, he must inevitably accomplish miraculous things among them.—Just consider the situation of the Hebrews. Ignorant, as they are, they measure the strength of the gods according to the happiness of the peoples under their protection. Forsaken and repressed by men, they believe themselves forsaken by all gods; just that relationship they themselves have toward the Egyptians, must their God, according to their conception, have toward the god of the Egyptians; the former is thus but a small light in comparison to the latter, or the Hebrews even begin to doubt, that they have a God at all. Then at once it is proclaimed to them, that they, too, have a protector in the firmament, and that this protector is awoken from his rest, that he is

girding and arming himself, to accomplish great deeds against their enemies.

This revelation of God is now tantamount to the call of a general to march under his victorious flag. If this general also provides demonstrations of his strength, or if they still know him from times past, the deception of enthusiasm will incite even the most fearful; and of this, too, Moses took account in his design.

The discussion which he holds with the apparition in the burning thornbush, presents us the doubts which he has cast upon himself, and the way and means he has answered them. "Will my unhappy nation gain confidence in a God who so long neglected it, who now appears, all of a sudden, as if fallen out of heaven, whose name they never heard called—who was an idle contemplator for centuries of the mistreatment which it suffered? Will it not, on the contrary, consider the God of its happy enemy more powerful? "This was the next thought, which necessarily rose up in the new prophet. How shall he now alleviate these doubts? He makes his Jao into the God of their fathers, he connects Him to their old folk legends, and thus transforms Him into a domestic God, into an ancient and well-known God. But, in order to demonstrate, that the God he means is the true and only God among them, in order to avoid any confusion with any creature whatsoever of superstition, in order to leave no room for any misunderstanding, he gives Him the sacred name which He actually bears in the mysteries. "I shall be, that I am become. Tell the people of Israel, "Moses has Him say, "*I shall be*, who hath sent me unto you."

In the mysteries, the divinity actually bears this name. But this name must have been utterly incomprehensible to the ignorant people of Hebrews. They were hardly capable of conceiving what was meant, and Moses could have had far more fortune with a different name; but he wanted rather to subject himself to this inconvenience, than to relinquish the idea most important to him, and this was: to introduce to the Hebrews the true God taught in the mysteries of Isis. Since it is fairly certain, that the Egyptian mysteries flourished for a long time before Jehovah appeared to

Moses in the burning bush, it is surely worth noting, that this apparition bears the very same name, which it bore previously in the mysteries of Isis.

But it was not yet sufficient, that Jehovah proclaim Himself to the Hebrews as a God well-known to them, as the God of their fathers; He also needed to legitimize Himself as a powerful God, should they take Him into their hearts; and this was all the more necessary, as their fate in Egypt could not have given them a very grand opinion of their protector. And since, furthermore, He proclaimed Himself among them only through a third person, He would have to invest this person with His power, and make him capable of demonstrating his mission, as well as the power and greatness, by extraordinary deeds, of Him who sent him.

Thus, were Moses to justify his mission, he must support his mission by miraculous deeds. That he indeed performed these miracles, there can be no doubt. How he performed them, and how they are to be understood—we leave to each to reflect upon for himself.

The story in which Moses cloaks his mission contains everything necessary to imbue the Hebrews with faith in it, and this was all that it was intended to do—among us, the story need no longer have this effect. We now know, for example, that it would be irrelevant to the Creator of the world, should He ever decide to appear before a human being in fire or wind, whether such a person appeared before Him barefoot, or not barefoot.—But Moses has his Jehovah command, that he should take his shoes from his feet, for he knew very well, that he had to assist his Hebrews to the conception of divine sanctity by means of some sensuous signs—and just such a sign he had retained from the initiation ceremonies.

He reflected also, no doubt, that his heavy tongue, for example, might be a hindrance—so he anticipated this inconvenience, and wove the objections he might have to fear into his tale, and Jehovah himself would have to overcome them. Moreover, he subordinates himself to his mission only after resisting a long time—the more weight need be laid

into God's command, the which then compelled him upon his mission. The most detailed and particular is the portrait in his tale of that which the Israelites, and we, would have the most difficulty to believe, and there is no doubt, he had his good reasons for it.

If we briefly summarize the foregoing, what was the real plan which Moses conceived in the Arabian desert?

He wanted to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt, and help them to possession of their independence and a national constitution in a land of their own. But since he knew the difficulties which stood in his way on this venture quite well; since he knew there could be no reliance upon the latent forces of this people, until they had been given self-confidence, courage, hope, and enthusiasm; for he foresaw, that his eloquence would not take effect upon the soil of the oppressed, slavish minds of the Hebrews: And so he understood, that he must proclaim to them a higher, a supraterritorial protector, that he must likewise assemble his people under the flag of a divine general.

He thus gives them a God, in order first to lead them out of Egypt. But since that is not the end of it, since he must give them another land in place of the one he takes from them, and since they must first conquer this other land under arms, and sustain themselves in it, it is necessary, that he hold their united forces together in a national body, and he must thus give them laws and a constitution.

As a priest and a statesman, however, he knows, that the strongest and most indispensable pillar of all constitutions is religion; he must thus make use of the God, which he first gives his people only to liberate them from Egypt, as a mere commander of an army, also in the forthcoming legislation; he must thus at once proclaim Him, as he will later make use of Him. For legislation, and for the foundations of the state, he requires the true God, for he is a great and noble man, who cannot found a work which should last, upon a lie. By means of the constitution which he has designed for them, he wants to make his Hebrews a happy, and lastingly happy people, and this can only come to

pass, if he founds his legislation upon truth. For this truth, however, their powers of understanding are yet too dull; thus, he cannot bring this truth into their souls upon the pure path of Reason. Since he cannot convince them, he must persuade them, entice, seduce them. He must thus bestow upon the true God he gives them, characteristics which make Him comprehensible and worthy of being received by weak minds; he must cloak his God in heathen robes, and must be satisfied, if they treasure just these heathen features of his true God, and perceive truth only in a heathen way. By this, too, he gains endlessly, he gains, in that the foundation of his legislation is true, so that a future reformer need not collapse the basic edifice of the constitution if he undertakes improvements of conceptions, which are the inevitable consequence in all false religions, as soon as the torch of Reason sheds its light upon them.

All other states of that time, and of times following, are founded upon fraud and error, polytheism, although, as we have seen, there was a small circle which fostered correct conceptions of the Supreme Being. Moses, himself of this circle, and with only this circle to thank for his own better idea of the Supreme Being, is the first who dares not only to proclaim aloud the results of the most secret mysteries, but even to make it the foundation of a state. He thus becomes, for the best for the world and posterity, a betrayer of the mysteries, and lets an entire nation partake of a truth, which until then had been the possession of only a few wise men. Clearly, with this new religion, he could not give his Hebrews the powers of mind necessary to comprehend it, and in that respect the Egyptian *epopts* had a great advantage over them. The *epopts* recognized the truth through their Reason, the Hebrews were at most capable of blindly believing in it.